

PRIMARY EDUCATION IN INDIA :
ITS FUTURE

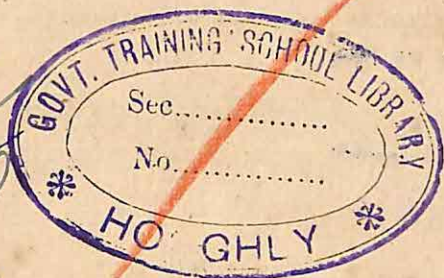
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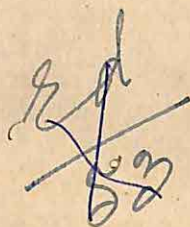
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TO
DR. ZAKIR HUSAIN
who in our days has done more than anyone else
to clarify the ideals of primary education
with
sincere regard and esteem

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Z. Husain', with a large diagonal stroke crossing through it.

PREFACE

The present essay grew out of an article I was invited to contribute to *Fifteen Years Ahead*, the magnificent volume on future planning in India, published by Fazalbhoy Ltd., of Bombay, early this year. I take this opportunity of acknowledging my debt to them for allowing me to make use of that article for this essay.

The object of this study was to make a brief survey of the present position of primary education in India and to indicate broadly the lines of future reorganisation. As its scope was thus restricted, many of the details had naturally to be left out. In the hope that it may be of some use to them it is now presented to the future legislators of the nation. When they take up the reins of national government one of their first duties will be to consider and pass effective legislation for primary education in order to ensure a sound foundation for our future national culture.

Calcutta University, }
The 13th April. 1946

ANATHNATH BASU.

By the same author

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PRIMARY EDUCATION IN INDIA : ITS FUTURE

I

Introduction

It does not require a prophet to say that in the next ten or fifteen years in the field of reconstruction our major attention will be paid to education, and that in education too our efforts will be mainly devoted to the task of building up a nation-wide and efficient system of primary education which will serve as a sure and sound foundation for the entire educational structure. When a truly national government comes into power, as we are all hoping it will, before long, this will be its first and foremost task. It will be a test of its bonafides ; it will, in fact be a sort of a challenge. On its ability to meet this challenge will depend whether the government will survive or perish. Hitherto primary education in this country has been the most neglected part of our educational system and its progress up till now has been woefully meagre. As a result, the Indian educational structure to-day resembles more or less an inverted pyramid. This has been due, as we all know, to the unequal emphasis that was laid in the last one hundred years on secondary and higher education to the exclusion of mass education. How that happened is a matter of history and no useful purpose will

be served in recounting it here. If like all other civilised countries of the world we in India are to have a national system of education then we must correct that wrong emphasis and remedy the defects of the past, we must begin by building the foundation and make education truly national in extent as well as content. Education in India has too long been the privilege and prerogative of the rich and the few, it must now be open and available to all, irrespective of caste or creed or sex or station in life. We must recognise that education is the birthright of every Indian and we must make provision for that in our educational system.

It is an admitted fact that in the past there has been too much neglect. Our job in the immediate future will, therefore, be to make amends and make up for the lost time. How shall we set about the task? A preliminary stock-taking is necessary specially with regard to administration and organisation of primary education, its contents and methods, and the results so far achieved.

Before we proceed to do that we should clearly state what we expect from primary education, that is, what we consider to be its objectives. In this connection it would be well to remember that for the majority of the people of this country this will be the only kind of education, the only preparation for future citizenship, that they will receive. Now, can the objectives of primary education be defined in concrete terms, that is, in terms of recognisable accomplishments and measurable achievements? If

this could be done it would be of great help in many ways. For, it will give us not only a clear perception of the functions of primary schools but also well-defined standards with the help of which we may always measure the success or otherwise of any individual school. Moreover, it will give us helpful guidance in reconstructing the contents and methods of primary education.

Characteristics of the development of children :

In defining these objectives it is essential that we take careful notice of the main characteristics of the development of the child during the primary school years. Such development is four-fold. First, there is the obvious physical development. The child grows in body, height and weight. Physiologically speaking somewhere between the fifth and the seventh year of his life the child has passed through the second critical phase of development* and has settled down to a comparatively calm period of even progress at the end of which lies the most difficult period in his life, namely that of adolescence. In order that he may prepare himself for the exigencies of that period and cross the hurdle of adolescence successfully it is essential that his growth should be all-round and not one-sided or partial. Such all-round growth

* Physiologically the first critical period in life comes in the first two years when the baby grows rapidly in physique; gradually the rate of progress slows down and becomes more or less steady between the second and the fifth year or thereabout (there is a lot of individual differences in these matters) which is, in a way, a period of consolidation. At the end of this period of steady consolidation there is another period of spurt, of rapid growth which extends roughly over two years. Then again comes a period of steadiness. The periods of rapid physical growth are the critical periods of life. Incidence of disease is the largest in these periods. Difficulties of other types also mark them.

comprises physical as well as other kinds of growth. Besides growing physically the child, in this period, should develop his intellectual abilities and potentialities. Then there is the most important emotional development on which will largely depend his future happiness as an individual. Finally, there is the social development which will determine his effectiveness or otherwise as a member of society.

It is therefore obvious that the primary school must attend to each single aspect of this four-fold development. It should not only take care of the intellectual growth of children but should also make itself responsible for their physical, emotional and social development. It is not enough if a primary school attends to the intellectual side only and neglects the three other equally important aspects of development. In fact, if an estimate of the comparative importance of the four aspects of child development is at all to be made, intellect would come last. One word about social development. When we realise that primary education is the only education that will be available to the largest majority of the future citizens of this country the importance of giving social education at the primary stage will be more than obvious.

Objectives of primary education :

Can we then define the scope of achievements and accomplishments in concrete terms under each one of the four aspects of child development during the period of primary education ? This has been

done with regard to elementary schools in western countries, but as far as we know nothing like this has been done with regard to Indian primary schools.* Some objectives were however defined in the Wardha scheme of education sponsored by Gandhiji, but that scheme is yet to be generally accepted.

The following list of accomplishments and achievements is based on the work that has been done recently in America and Australia in this direction.†

Physical Growth :

1. At the end of the course the child has attained the normal physical development within the limits accepted for the average child of his age.
2. He can use his body easily, effectively and gracefully in free and directed games, dramatics and other similar activities.
3. He has formed correct health habits and takes pride in maintaining maximum bodily efficiency.

* It is necessary to realise the distinction between *curriculum* and *objectives*. A curriculum no doubt implies certain objectives but they need not be and are not always clearly stated. Objectives emphasise the end-results while the curriculum is concerned more with the progression towards such results.

† See *The Teacher in the Modern Elementary School*, Houghton Mifflin, New York, 1941 and *Reform in the Primary School*, Australian Council for Educational Research, Melbourne, 1943. In preparing the list we have also utilised the statement on the objectives of Basic schools in the *Report of the Zakir Husain Committee*, pp 15 ff. It may be noted in passing that these objectives of Basic education have been defined, not in terms of the aspects of child development but with reference to the subjects included in the Basic curriculum.

In this connection it may also be noted that because of the organic unity of human nature there is bound to be some overlapping in studying the different aspects of human development. For example, physical growth goes on *pari passu* with other kinds of growth. Training a particular sense leads to physical as well as intellectual development. Therefore quite naturally there is some amount of repetition when an attempt is made to study the problem of development from different points of view.

4. He has mastered the mechanics of speech, so that he speaks easily, effectively and correctly.

5. He can use simple tools with sufficient skill to produce articles of use and beauty.

Intellectual Growth :

1. He can use easily and effectively the informal speech in his mother tongue in his daily conversation.

2. He can use with equal success the higher level of speech necessary on more formal occasions such as describing everyday happenings e.g. making reports to his class.

3. He can read orally or silently, written passages of average difficulty with reasonable speed, accuracy, comprehension and enjoyment, the capacity being developed at least to such an extent that he can read newspapers and magazines of everyday interest.

4. He can write a business or friendly letter legibly, correctly and with reasonable speed.

5. He can solve with reasonable speed and absolute accuracy any arithmetical problem which has social value for him including simple problems of measurement.

6. He has mastered such computational skills in the fundamental processes of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of whole numbers, easy fractions and simple decimals as are necessary for the solution of such problems.

7. He has a fairly thorough knowledge of the geography of India and has a fair acquaintance with the broad features of world geography.

8. He knows such major facts and has such understanding of the story of India and the world as may be reasonably required of a child of his age.

9. He has a clear understanding of the way in which science contributes to our daily life.

10. He can express himself roughly in lines and simple colours.

11. He has an effective grasp of the ways in which arts and crafts contribute to our everyday life.

12. He understands his responsibilities as a neighbour and his rights and duties as a citizen, and has some idea of how the government of the country is run.

Emotional and Social Growth :*

1. He can get along happily and successfully with other children and with adults.

2. He likes people and likes to be with them.

3. He finds satisfaction in being a member of a congenial group.

4. Other members like to have him in the group.

5. He is open-minded and tolerant.

6. He accepts responsibility, displays initiative, and is resourceful in an emergency.

* It will be seen from the above that the growth of emotional and social characteristics has not been separately indicated. This is due to the fact that emotions always have a social background. Emotions are called into play when there is an impact between the individual and his environment, this environment being primarily social.

7. He has mastered the conventions demanded by ordinary social situations.
8. He displays poise and self-control under criticism and opposition.
9. He has courage, physical as well as mental, to face a new situation or danger.
10. He responds readily to beauty seen or heard.
11. He has developed a hobby, that is, he has accumulated sufficient inner resources to fill his leisure time with experiences appropriate to his age.

If we accept the above list of accomplishments which the child should show at the end of the primary school stage we at once get a ready standard with which to evaluate the achievements of the present system of primary education in India. With these in view we therefore now proceed to an examination of the present position of our primary education system in all its important aspects.

II

The Present Position

Administration :

The administration of primary education is at present in the hands of local authorities. These local authorities may either be the District Board (in urban areas the Municipal Board) or as in some provinces, a statutory *ad hoc* body like the District School Board created by an Act of the provincial legislature. These local bodies administer primary education in their respective areas. They maintain their own schools, appoint their teachers, prescribe the courses and text-books and take any other step that may be necessary for the maintenance of the system ; and they enjoy complete authority in their management. They also give grants to privately managed institutions over which, however, they have very little control. There are also privately managed schools which receive no aid from any quarter, their only source of income being the tuition fee paid by their pupils.

The position of the Local Government *vis a vis* these local bodies is more or less of an advisory nature. The Local Government give grants to the local bodies to supplement their financial resources, but otherwise they do not generally interfere with their internal administration. In some provinces the Government also provide the inspecting staff for primary schools the members of which act as

liaison officers between the Provincial Government and the local bodies. On the whole, however, the Provincial Governments exercise very little control over the affairs of the local bodies. Years ago the Government decided as a matter of policy, to withdraw from the field of primary education and leave it to the local bodies and to voluntary agencies. So it came about that the responsibility of providing education to the masses came to be divided between the local bodies, the District and Municipal Boards, and private agencies. The Government did not take any direct responsibility though they gave grants to local bodies to help them in their programme of work.

The main responsibility for providing mass education thus devolved upon these local authorities. They and the voluntary agencies between them today maintain by far the largest number of primary schools though there are a few Government schools. According to the latest available returns there were in British India, in 1936-37, in all 197,227 primary schools. Of these only 2,666 were Government institutions; the Board schools were 72,363 in number, while the number of private schools was 122,198. It would appear from the above that primary education in India is still too largely dependent on voluntary agencies for its progress. The number of schools directly under State management is negligible and more than sixty per cent of schools are under private management.

The following paragraph taken from the *Eleventh Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education*

in India gives a fair picture of the present position of the various types of primary schools in existence today :

"The primary schools administered by Government are on the whole more efficient than those managed by local bodies or private agencies. In certain provinces the majority of the primary schools maintained by Government are practising schools attached to training schools for primary school teachers. Grants are also given to local bodies by Government toward the expenses of primary education and the local bodies in turn make grants to aided primary schools. The grant-in-aid given to such aided schools is seldom adequate with the result that they are generally ill-staffed and ill-equipped. * * * In some cases the grant is as small as eight annas a month. * * * It is unfortunate that the local bodies have not hitherto done as much as they might to improve the efficiency of primary education in the areas under their control, though there are welcome signs here and there of attempts to improve the state of affairs in this respect."

In course of the last twenty five years many attempts have been made to improve the condition of primary education. During this period various Primary Education Acts have been passed in the different provincial legislatures. Their main object has been to strengthen the position of the local authorities. These Acts give power to these local authorities to introduce *at their option* a compulsory system of elementary education in their respective

areas for children (in most Acts the provision is for boys only) between the ages of six and ten. They also empower the local authorities to impose an education cess to finance the cost of maintaining the system. There is besides provision for statutory grants from the provincial exchequer to supplement the resources of the local authorities. But in spite of all these efforts the progress of primary education has been extremely slow. In 1936-37 there were in British India about six crores of children of the school-going age (i.e. in the 5-14 age group); of these only 1·2 crores i.e. about one-fifth were under instruction. And in 1940-41, that is almost twenty years after the passing of the Primary Education Acts* there were in the whole of British India in all 194 urban areas and 3297 rural areas where some sort of compulsion has been in force. These three thousand and odd rural areas comprise in all about fifteen thousand villages; and in India there are seven lakhs of such villages !

The causes of the failure of the local authorities to implement the provisions of the Primary Education Acts and to build up a well-organised system of compulsory primary education are not far to seek. Firstly, we may note that under the provisions of the Primary Education Acts the option of introducing compulsion rested with the local authorities. There was no provision in them for a central directive authority. Secondly, the imposition of the education cess was also left to the option of

* A large majority of them were enacted within a few years after the introduction of the new constitution in 1919.

the local authorities. One who knows anything about these Boards can easily imagine what may have been the result of such option. No elective body specially of the type of these District and Municipal Boards would care to introduce a new cess and face unpopularity and risk defeat in elections. And in the absence of fresh sources of revenue and in their existing financial resources it is no wonder that the Primary Education Acts have remained up till now more or less a dead letter. The fate of compulsion under such circumstances was naturally sealed and a universal system of compulsory primary education still remains an unfulfilled dream of educationists and politicians.

Finance :

We may now pass on to the question of the finance of primary education. In 1936-37 the total amount spent on education of all types in British India was a little over Rs. 28 crores. Of this Rs. 8.4 crores were for primary education. So the share of primary education in the total educational budget was just about 30 per cent. It would appear from the above that we in this country are even today spending on an average less than 2 rupee *per capita* for primary education. It is better not to compare this figure with figures for other countries. It is only natural that with such poor financial backing, the provision for primary education in this country is so utterly inadequate and its condition so extremely inefficient.

It is interesting to note that of the total of Rs. 8·4 crores spent on primary education about Rs. 7 crores were for boys alone and only Rs. 1·4 crores went for girls' education. This shows clearly the disproportionate nature of the expenditure on the education of boys and girls.

An analysis of the sources of expenditure is revealing. There are, generally speaking, four main heads from which the amount spent on primary education is derived : (i) provincial exchequer ; (ii) Board funds ; (iii) fees, and (iv) endowments and other sources. As we have already seen, besides directly maintaining a limited number of schools the Provincial Governments give grants to local authorities for meeting the expenses of primary education in their areas. The Board funds are made up of such grants and grants, if any, set apart from their own general funds for the purposes of education. Where education cess exists, as it does in a limited number of areas, the cess provides the largest amount in the Board fund for primary education. In 1936-37 of the total of Rs. 7 crores spent on primary education of boys Government funds provided Rs. 3·45 crores, Board funds Rs. 2·4 crores while the amount met by fees was '46 crores, other sources being responsible for '67 crores.* The percentage works out as follows :—Government funds 49·3, Board funds 34·4, fees 6·6 and other sources 9·6. It would appear that fees and other sources even now account for more than 16% of the total expenditure. In a poor country like ours this is undoubtedly

* Corresponding figures for girls' primary education are not available.

a heavy burden on parents specially when we remember that poverty has been a great stumbling block in the progress of primary education in this country. In this connection one other fact need be mentioned. Some of the Primary Education Acts while making education compulsory have not made it free. As a result in some areas where compulsion has been introduced the parents besides paying the cess have also to pay the tuition fees of their children.

Enrolment and Attendance :

The total number of pupils in the primary stage in 1936-37 in the whole of British India was 11,465,700. Of these 10,006,190 were boys and 1,458,510 girls. The disparity in the number of boys and girls is indeed striking. The explanation lies in the fact that in spite of the marked progress of girls' education in recent years, the education of girls is not yet recognised as imperative a necessity as that of boys.

In the absence of compulsion, attendance in schools is on voluntary basis, that is, children go to school when their guardians feel inclined to send them there and they remain at school as long as they feel inclined to do so, or as long as it is not inconvenient to their guardians to keep them there. As we have already stated, one result of this has been that in 1936-37 out of about six crores of children who should be receiving instruction only about 1.2 crores were in attendance at school of some sort or other. Perhaps at first sight the situation would

not appear to be very bad ; but when we note that a majority of these children were in class I and left school in a year or two without proceeding further, then alone the true state of affairs reveals itself and we see not only the terrible wastage of time, money and human material that is going on all round us, but we also realise the magnitude of the task that lies ahead of us, in its true perspective.

Wastage and Stagnation :

In 1936-37 of the 1·2 crores of children under instruction 51·9 lakhs were in class I, 23·1 lakhs in class II, 17·2 lakhs in class III, 12·1 lakhs in class IV and only 7 lakhs in class V. The percentage (taking the enrolment in class I as 100) works out as follows :—

Class	I	II	III	IV	V
Percentage	100	45	33	23	13

These figures clearly indicate the amount and extent of wayside dropping at every class all through the primary course. Such dropping is specially marked after class I. Higher up it gradually decreases, but nowhere is it negligible. It would appear that more than half the children in class I fail to obtain promotion and never go beyond that class. They stagnate there without any advantage to them only impeding the progress of others ; and after a year or two they leave school without having obtained any return for the time and energy spent by them or on them. This is the saddest feature of our primary education system.

Another disquieting feature is that out of every four children who joined class I less than one remained in school for four years*, that is, long enough to reach the earliest stage at which permanent literacy—to say nothing of other more important educational objectives—is *likely* to be attained. In terms of economics it means that over 80% of our educational expenditure on primary education is simply wasted.

Causes of wastage and inefficiency :

Many are the causes that have been suggested to explain this appalling wastage in our primary system. Incompetent teaching, existence of a large number of inefficient and incomplete single-teacher schools, defective curriculum, irregular admission, and attendance, heterogeneous classes, lack of proper equipment and accommodation, all these have contributed to this ; but the main causes are undoubtedly the poverty of the people and more than anything else, the absence of compulsion.

The teacher is the pivot of any educational system. On him rests the failure or success of the system. If he is himself well-educated and trained and if he is intellectually alive and keen in his job then success is ensured ; but if on the other hand he himself lacks education and training and if he cannot keep his heart in his job then the system is bound to fail. In this country such has been the case specially in the field of primary education.

* In the case of girls the proportion is lower still. There we find that for every 100 girls who entered class I only 14 remained to reach class IV.

In many parts of the country the initial educational qualification for a teacher in primary schools is extremely low ; sometimes it is no more than the middle standard certificate. In some cases it is even below that. There are many teachers who themselves have not gone beyond the primary stage. It is difficult if not impossible to expect good work from them.

Attempts have no doubt been made from time to time, to give a course of professional training to the teachers in primary schools. Such courses generally extend over a period of one year. But no amount of training can make up for initial lack of education. Because of the low standards of intellectual attainments of pupil-teachers, their training often degenerates into teaching rule-of-thumb methods of instruction. Such training, therefore, is of little value to any one, either the teachers or their pupils.

Teaching in primary schools has not yet attained the status of a profession in India. The pay and prospects of our primary school teachers are, as is well-known, dismally poor. Most of them are not even paid a bare living wage. Not many years ago the average pay of a primary school teacher in one big province was rupees six only, that is, less than what we pay to a bearer or *chaprasi*. Of late the situation has improved to some extent ; but even now the average pay of primary teachers in private schools is not much more than Rs. 10 per month. Under such circumstances it is futile to expect that a better set of people with better

educational qualifications will be attracted to the profession and take up teaching as their life's vocation. So teaching has become the last haven and refuge for all those who have failed in other walks of life or who lack initiative enough to try their luck elsewhere. The result is that a great majority of schools are staffed by men whose failure has soured their outlook in life which poverty and low status in society have further embittered, men who have very little zest left in them and who feel no joy or pride of calling in the profession they have been forced to adopt out of necessity. It is therefore not at all surprising that the teaching imparted in most of our primary schools is extremely inefficient and ineffective.

The fact is not widely known that nearly fifty per cent of the primary schools in British India still are schools which have only one teacher on their staff. It has been found that wastage and stagnation are greatest in single-teacher schools. Of course India being a land of small villages it will never be possible to eliminate completely such single-teacher schools. Even in advanced countries like the United States there are many such schools ; but whereas there exist other alleviating factors which tend to minimise the defects of the system in those countries, in India such factors are completely absent. For example, in this country, as we have already seen, most of the teachers in these single-teacher schools are not only untrained but also they themselves have very little education with the result that teaching imparted by

them is extremely incompetent and unsatisfactory. Such incompetent teaching can only lead to further wastage and stagnation.

Many of these single-teacher schools are incomplete schools i.e. schools with one or two classes only. They can only lead to wastage. In the absence of planning there is no regular and efficient system of feeder and central schools. As a result children spend a year or two in an incomplete school and go back to their homes to relapse before long into illiteracy.

While a large number of these single-teacher schools are incomplete schools, many of them are complete schools with four or even five classes. Under the existing conditions that cannot but increase their inefficiency. It is difficult even for a fairly competent teacher to do justice to his pupils, if they are a heterogeneous collection of children of all ages and at all stages of progress in several distinct classes. How much more so it will be when the teacher himself is half-educated and untrained, can only be imagined.

Irregular admission and attendance

The heterogeneous character of the population in an average primary school is further emphasised and strengthened because of two other factors, irregular admission and poor attendance. There are practically no fixed terms in our primary schools ; children are admitted almost at all times during the year and they come with all sorts of intellectual background. And not only that ; in the absence of any definite age for compulsion, children of all ages are admitted into

school adding to the mixed nature of the classes and increasing thereby the difficulties of the poor teachers. An institution which depends to a large extent on fee income, however meagre that may be, can ill afford to displease a guardian and decline to admit his ward because of either over-age or under-age. The result is that in class I one will find children of all ages, from 4 to 10. And they are at all stages of progress. Under the existing circumstances that can only lead to inefficient teaching and to stagnation and wastage. Add to this the problem of irregular attendance on account of absence of compulsion and you can imagine not only the heterogeneous nature of the population of an average primary school in this country, but also the many difficulties that the teacher of such a school has to face.

Lack of accommodation and equipment

A school of that type under an incompetent teacher can hardly be an attractive place for growing children. An average Indian primary school is indeed a dull and dreary place. This is true in the physical as well as the spiritual sense. I am not complaining of the lack of the good buildings and expensive teaching equipment which one finds in the primary schools in western countries and which enliven the life of the children in those schools. But there is a minimum standard in these respects and even that is lacking in most of our schools. A great majority of them have practically no building of their own, not to speak of equipment and amenities like gardens and playing fields. Perhaps interesting methods of instruction

might have made up for some of these deficiencies ; but as we have seen, most of the teachers in primary schools are themselves half-educated and a great majority of them are without any professional training, and so they can hardly be expected to use methods which could enliven the teaching under such adverse circumstances. The total effect of all these has been that in these schools there is very little joy and attraction for the young learners who come there for their education.

Defective Curriculum

On the top of everything comes a curriculum which is, to say the least, uninteresting and uninspiring in the extreme, and in which education is dissociated from life and all the emphasis is one-sided. In the present curriculum there is very little provision for meeting the physical needs of young children. Physical education, games and such activities have practically no place there. As for children's emotional and social growth the provisions are absolutely non-existent. There is no scope there for music, handwork, and other forms of creative activities which could provide at once some essential skills and an outlet for proper emotional development. We simply do not give them social education and our schools have practically no social life. We do not allow the children the necessary opportunities for accepting responsibility and taking the initiative. We still tend to continue to attach excessive importance to the 'three R's' and to regard education as something which has to do only with the intellect,

something to be obtained from books and accepted in a sitting position from benches and desks and tested by a written examination.* Normal and healthy children have a passion for making things with their hands and they take intense delight in activities which are truly speaking far more educative than books, and which educate more directly and in a much more interesting manner than books ever can. And yet in our primary curriculum there is hardly any provision for such activities. It is all book-learning and nothing more. Hence it is no wonder that children seldom find any attraction for their schools as they are today ; and they can hardly be blamed if there are premature withdrawals and chronic disinclination on the part both of pupils and their parents to continue in the deadening atmosphere which prevails there.

One peculiar characteristic of our primary curriculum is that in spite of many attempted reforms and innovations the present curriculum is more or less a miniature replica of the secondary course, just as narrowly theoretical and bookish as the latter. Not only are the same subjects studied and similar courses and books prescribed, but the same methods are followed.

* We do not yet realise that L. P. Jacks had the right idea when he said, "If I had my way as an educator, I would not spend all my efforts on direct attacks upon the mind by book-learning and by academic methods. I would seek rather to outflank the mind by getting round the body.*** I would get at the mind less through the spoken word that enters by the ears and more by the skill that comes out of the five fingers, and not only from the five fingers, but from the body as a whole." Quoted in the *Reform in the Primary School*, p. 12.

But whereas the secondary course leads to some vocations however limited they may be, the primary course as it is constituted today cannot, from its very nature, do so. So it has neither the economic advantages of the secondary course, nor, because of its divorce from life and of its unpractical nature, is it of any direct utilitarian value to the pupils or their parents. So many a parent finds little incentive to send his children to a primary school specially if he knows that he cannot keep them in school long enough to complete at least the secondary course. The primary schools thus have become merely feeders to the secondary schools in a single-track system of education. They (the primary schools) do not provide a course either complete in itself (it is difficult to do so if it is to be only of four years' duration as it at present is,) or leading to any well defined and easily attainable vocational objective.

A curriculum which is bookish and theoretical and which thus leads practically to nowhere can have very little attraction for the pupils or their guardians. Moreover, by creating in the minds of children a fantasy world based on book-learning and without any real contact with their actual life, the present system of primary education tends to alienate the sympathies and affections of the children and wean them away from their village homes and the occupations of their fathers. They neither become good farmers or rural craftsmen nor do their meagre education give them necessary training for becoming efficient workers in cities towards which they drift.

Why then, says the parent, send children for such education ?

Poverty

It has been said that one of the main causes of the failure of the present system of primary education in this country has been the poverty of its people. Poverty has bred ignorance and there is among the masses, a consequent lack of appreciation of the values and advantages of education. It is not always realised how true this has been the case. In the present economic conditions of the people the few pieces of copper that a child may earn by looking after the cattle or doing some such work, are a welcome addition to the family budget. There is some divergence of opinion about the average *per capita* annual income in India. According to some it is only sixty-five rupees. For the majority of people it is no more than rupees thirty. If then a child earns even one or two rupees in the year it comes as a substantial sum. Under the circumstances if the poor peasants and labourers are reluctant to sacrifice any contribution from that quarter, they can hardly be blamed.

Ignorance and apathy are the direct outcome of the extreme poverty of our people. They have no desire for education nor do they feel any inclination to send their children to school unless they are compelled to do so. We do not often realise that the appreciation of the values of education is itself the result of education. So to expect that the demand for popular education would come from the people is to expect

too much, specially when there are, as we have seen, so many other deterrent factors. In order that the people may be inclined to demand education for their children they must themselves be educated. The absence of any organised system of adult education makes it difficult to educate the popular mind to the needs of education for young children. It is now being increasingly felt that parental co-operation is a *sine qua non* of the success of a system of primary education. Without parental co-operation primary education cannot make any headway. Once therefore parents are educated to feel the need for educating their own children and such education is made worthwhile, then alone they will make the necessary sacrifices which sending children to school would mean to them, and then only we shall get their willing and active co-operation.

In western countries there are many amenities which go to lessen the burden of the parents and so indirectly encourage co-operation between home and school. Primary education there is not only absolutely free but there are other arrangements also to help the people. I am referring to the system of maintenance grants and the provision for the free supply of books and other educational materials. There they even supply milk and free tiffin to needy pupils. There are also arrangements for free medical aid. These and other amenities go a long way to overcome the apathy of the masses towards education of their children, an apathy which is found not only in India but also in other so-called more

advanced countries in the west. Unfortunately for us there is no such provision in this country. Here far from primary education being made free, even in areas where compulsion has been introduced there is in many cases provision for charging fees. This makes the position of the parents all the more difficult.

Compulsion

Willing and properly educated parental co-operation is the best substitute for compulsion. But such co-operation is not always and readily available. Therefore comes the question of compulsion. Compulsion is the only effective remedy for many of the existing defects. It alone can ensure regular attendance and prevent wastage. At one time our educational administrators used to fight shy of the idea of compulsion and many were the substitute remedies suggested by them. Now however we have come to realise that in the field of primary education there are no short cuts in the matter of compulsion, that neither economy nor efficiency can be attained without recourse to it. If we are to have an efficient system of primary education then we must have compulsion which alone can stop wastage, eliminate uneconomic investment in incompetent and in incomplete schools, and ensure some measure of efficiency. It has now been admitted that compulsion is an economy and not a luxury which must wait for better times. We have already seen how, owing to defective legislation, compulsion could not be enforced on any extensive scale. The defect lay not so much

in the wording of the legislation as in the spirit in which it was given effect to. As a result the local authorities who were made responsible for organising primary education failed in their charge. The absence of a central directive authority further complicated the situation. It has now become practically obvious that the enforcement of compulsion can no longer be left to the option of the local authorities and that the entire machinery for the administration of primary education should be thoroughly overhauled and recast. The new set-up must be characterised by greater centralisation, specially in the matter of initiation and direction. The position of the local authorities *vis a vis* such more centralised authority will then have to be carefully and clearly laid down. And if primary education is going to be made compulsory it must at the same time be made free. Compulsory education is everywhere free and in a poor country like ours where poverty of the people has stood in the way of the progress of education, there is no justification for making it otherwise. Primary education is not a luxury but a national investment and so we want to make compulsory provision for it. Were it not so then perhaps there might have been some justification for charging fees.

Incidentally another weakness in the present system of financing education may be pointed out, for, the whole question of primary education is, really speaking, a matter of finance. Under the new constitution education is a provincial matter and the Central Government have no responsibility about it.

And yet all the expansible sources of national income are under the control of the Central Government while practically all the major items of expenditure (excepting defence) are left to the Provincial Governments whose sources of revenue are, even under the best of conditions, extremely limited. Such inequitable financial arrangement has been responsible, to not a little extent, for the slow progress of all nation-building activities including education.

The only feasible solution of the present deadlock seems to be that the provision of a national system of education (by which I mean primarily the system of universal primary education) should be the direct responsibility of the Central Government which should finance the entire scheme. The Provincial Governments will, in the matter of primary education, then act as agents of the Central Government. The present constitution of the Provincial Governments offers an additional reason in support of the above suggestion. Experience has it that in the past they have generally shown a lamentable lack of courage to initiate a bold programme of expansion and consolidation. Their financial weakness to which reference has been made, has no doubt been the chief cause for this lack of courage and initiative. But whatever may have been the cause or causes the result has been that today in India we are left with an extremely inefficient system of primary education utterly inadequate in extent and almost useless and ineffective in content.

III

The Future

Our task for the future is then a thorough and complete reorganisation and reorientation of the system of primary education in the land. The first step in that reorganisation will be the introduction of compulsion and the setting up of an appropriate and efficient administrative machinery. Our second step will be to reconstruct the entire contents and methods of primary education. This would mean not only a radical reform of the curriculum and the methods of instruction in primary schools, but also a reorientation of the atmosphere which pervades there. An essential part, if it is not the most essential part, of our programme will be to recruit and train a new type of teachers for primary schools who will take up their work in that spirit and with that devotion which it demands and deserves. Such is the outline of the task which lies ahead of us.

Plans for reconstruction

Fortunately we have now before us two schemes of educational reconstruction much along the lines we have here laid down, which may guide us in our efforts. I refer to the scheme of Basic national education sponsored by Gandhiji and the scheme contained in the report of the Central Advisory Board of Education on post-war educational development in India.

Basic education

The scheme of Basic education is perhaps the most significant and radical attempt so far made to reconstruct primary education on an entirely new basis. Apart from the fact that it, for the first time, boldly recommended a free and compulsory universal primary education extending over a period not of 4 or 5 years but of 7 years, its chief contribution lies in offering us an entirely new ideology of primary education. The period has been extended to seven years not merely to ensure that the pupils will acquire effective and abiding literacy, but also to allow them sufficient time and opportunity to develop the right type of mental habits, interests, attitudes and appreciation which constitute education in the true sense of the term.

The fundamental concept of Basic education is activity education, that is, learning by doing. This is no new principle. Learning by doing has been an accepted method of education from time immemorial. But Basic education goes a step further. It holds that education must not only centre round some activity but that such activity must also and at the same time be related to the basic interests of the child mind and the basic occupations of the community life. Further, it should release the creative energies of the individual child along channels of productive and socially useful activity. This is the basic idea of craft-centered education. Moreover, education must help the child to correctly appraise and understand the social problems and to develop

social habits and attitudes.* And not only that, education must also teach our children to live and work together for common good. So in the Basic scheme we find a good deal of emphasis on co-operative activities of various kinds, such as co-operative planning and execution of school and classroom activities, community service on co-operative lines. Education must help us in building a new social order where co-operation and not competition will be the guiding principle in life.

One word more about the idea of craft-centered education. Its primary object is not the production of craftsmen. The idea here is that the resources implicit in craft-work are to be exploited fully for educative purposes. The craft is not to be just another subject like manual training ; it is the centre round which other subjects will be woven in a correlated manner. It has been aptly said that here a craft instead of books becomes the medium of instruction. As the child takes up the craftwork and practises it (and there is no doubt that because of the inherent love of activity a child will take to craft-work more readily than he takes to books) problems will arise which he will be called upon to understand and solve.

* In fact the upper limit for the period of compulsion has been fixed at 14 because earlier than this young children are not psychologically mature enough to understand these social problems. Social consciousness does not develop in children before about 11 or 12, and to teach them social habits and attitudes before that age is an imposition ; such teaching, besides being psychologically undesirable, is often ineffective in training character. In our discussion about the age-range for compulsory education, it is important to note this eminently sensible and psychologically sound justification for fixing the school-leaving age at a higher level than is usual or customary.

In course of doing that he will be tactfully, unobtrusively and gradually led by the teacher into the domains of arithmetic, history, geography, science and other school subjects. Such an introduction to subjects will not only be logical and psychological but also natural ; and the motivation to learning under such circumstances will be clear and imperative ; it will come from within the child and with it will be associated his instincts and emotions, the mainspring of all action. There can be no better atmosphere for effective learning than this.

There is another point : Young children stand in need more of direct perceptual experiences than of second-hand experiences gleaned from books. Psychology states that there is an intimate relation between the mind and senses, and that we learn not only from books but through the direct use of the various sense-organs. If we learn to use our fingers skillfully it simultaneously cultivates the intellect and helps in the development of the mind. No one will deny that book-learning is essential ; but books are not the only medium of instruction ; planned activities can well be as effective a medium as books. In the early stages specially we must not make a fetish of book-learning. For there is always the danger that books may come between the pupils and life, that they may provide a means of escape from life rather than an introduction to it. A well-selected craft has this advantage that it always pins children down to real and live problems.

The method by which the different subjects are to be related to the craft-activity and among themselves is that of correlation and integration. This method of correlation and integration tends to preserve the unity of knowledge which is so essential in the education of young children. Here education starts as an active process of integration of knowledge and it proceeds further and further through greater and wider integration. Further, knowledge attained through activity is practical and applied knowledge. Such knowledge is easily transferred from school situations to life situations.

Moreover craft-work offers ample opportunities for group activities which will lead to the formation of co-operative social habits. Socially useful and productive group activities offer the best training ground for morals and citizenship. Nothing can substitute them. Furthermore, craft-work being a link between the school and the community a close relationship is established through it between the school and society. Such a close relationship between the work done at school and the activities of the community enables the children to carry the outlook and attitudes acquired in the school environment over to the wider world outside.

On the above principles a complete and detailed syllabus of studies for seven years has been developed. Gandhiji expects that pupils who go through this syllabus will attain a standard which will be comparable to the present matriculation standard excepting in English for which there is no provision

in the Basic syllabus. There its place is taken by Hindusthani as the national language of India.

The entire scheme of Basic education may appear to be highly theoretical and unworkable in practice. But experiments on the lines of the scheme have been made during the last seven years, *i.e.* ever since its inception and are still being made in different parts of the country, and they have shown that such fears are groundless. There are difficulties no doubt specially on account of the lack of suitable teachers ; but that difficulty is common to all schemes, old and new. The experiments have also proved that some of the other criticisms of the scheme were equally unfounded. For example, it was thought that by trying to impart education through crafts we shall end by making the pupils at best indifferent craftsmen and nothing more, and that their intellectual work will suffer greatly. But the experiments have shown that the output of intellectual work compares very favourably with that of ordinary schools (though the pupils are yet to show that they would finally reach the matriculation standard as Gandhiji expects them to do). In addition these pupils have learnt one or other craft well enough to serve them in case of need. Moreover their training in certain directions such as development of social attitudes has been definitely better as compared to the ordinary schools.

Another criticism that was widely heard was about the self-supporting aspect of the scheme. The original idea was that the schools will be self-supporting by the sale of the craft-products at least to

the extent of meeting the salaries of teachers. Strong exception was taken to this idea. It was thought that this might lead to forced child labour. But it has been proved that it does not do anything of the kind. We may, however, justly criticise any measure which is liable to misinterpretation, as this idea of linking up the income from children's work and teachers' salaries is. This idea is alien to the fundamental ethics of the relationship between the teacher and the taught. So while we may agree to the view that children's craftwork should be productive and socially useful and saleable bringing in some monetary return to the school, we cannot allow any connection to exist between such returns and the salaries of teachers. Incidentally, many people do not realise that the original idea of self-support was toned down to some extent when the details of the scheme were worked out. Experiments so far conducted have shown that normally it is not possible to get back more than twenty per cent of the actual recurring expenses from the work done by the children.

The scheme of Basic education was launched in 1939. The Provincial Governments at that time took it up with great enthusiasm. Soon however, with the resignation of Congress ministries there was a change in the tide of affairs, and Basic education lost much of its popularity with the new administrators. Fortunately, some of them realised its possibilities and allowed the experiments to be continued. There are today a number of Basic schools in Bihar and

Bombay under the auspices of the Provincial Governments while experiments along the lines are being conducted in Bengal, C.P., Orissa and other provinces by private bodies. Among the Indian States the Government of Kashmir introduced it and is continuing the experiment. The Bihar experiment being the biggest of its kind is specially worthy of note. There in a compact area in one of the backward districts of the province Basic education has been tried for the last seven years in a number of schools which have gradually developed from single-grade schools to full-fledged Basic schools with all the seven classes. And the results achieved have been more than gratifying. Independent and impartial observers have testified to the good work that is being done there. Some of the observations made in the previous paragraph are, in fact, based on our personal experiences of a visit to these Bihar schools.

The Basic syllabus is now being revised in the light of the experiences of the last seven years. It is clear, however, that such revision will be largely in the matter of details ; the main outline and the fundamental principle will remain more or less unchanged, for they have already justified themselves at the bar of educational opinion and experience. That this is true is obvious from the fact that the Central Advisory Board of Education has also accepted the soundness of the principle underlying it and embodied it in their scheme for post-war educational reconstruction which we shall presently discuss. Whatever may be the fate of the scheme in the hands

of the administrators there is no doubt that the Basic idea has come to stay and that it will greatly influence the curriculum of the future in any scheme of educational reconstruction that we may take up in the years to come.

*Central Advisory Board's Plan**

The scheme of the Central Advisory Board of Education for post-war reconstruction is contained in the report of the Board published early in 1944. It is a grand scheme for providing India with a system of universal, compulsory and free education for all children between the ages of six and fourteen. Here is the official summary of the chapter of the report dealing with primary education :

“(a) A system of universal, compulsory and free education for boys and girls between the ages of six and fourteen should be introduced as speedily as possible though in view of the practical difficulty of recruiting the requisite supply of trained teachers, it may not be possible to complete it in less than forty years.

(b) The character of the instruction to be provided should follow the general lines laid down in the reports of the Central Advisory Board's two committees, on Basic education.

(c) The Senior Basic school, being the finishing school for the great majority of the future citizens,

* Commonly known as the Sargent Plan after Sir John Sargent, the Educational Adviser to the Government of India who was largely responsible for drawing it up.

is of fundamental importance and should be generously staffed and equipped.

(d) All education depends on the teacher. The present status and remuneration of teachers, and specially those in primary schools, are deplorable. The standards in regard to the training, recruitment and conditions of service of teachers prescribed in the report of the Committee approved by the Central Advisory Board in 1943 represent the minimum compatible with the success of a national system ; these should be adopted and enforced everywhere.

(e) A vast increase in the number of trained women teachers will be required.

(f) The total estimated annual cost of the proposals contained in the chapter when in full operation is Rs. 200 crores approximately."

The two committees of the Central Advisory Board examined the Wardha scheme of Basic education thoroughly and generally approved it with certain modifications. First, the age-group recommended for compulsory education was from six (instead of seven) to fourteen, thereby providing for a course extending over eight years instead of seven. It was further suggested that while preserving its essential unity the course should consist of two stages, the first one being the junior stage covering a period of five years and the second, the senior stage extending over three years. The break was to be at the age of eleven plus on grounds of psychological needs of children. One group, after this break, would go to high schools which would provide a course covering

six years, while the majority would continue to receive instruction in Senior Basic schools for a further period of three years till they are fourteen. Regarding the curriculum and the principle underlying it, the first report stated as follows : "The Wardha scheme of Basic education is in full agreement with the recommendations made in the Wood-Abbott Report so far as the principle of learning by doing is concerned. This activity should be of many kinds in the lower classes and later should lead to a basic craft, the produce of which should be saleable and the proceeds applied to the upkeep of the school." About the curriculum it was originally decided that English should not be introduced even as an optional subject in the Basic schools ; but later the Board seems to have revised its opinion. While reiterating its views that under no circumstances English should find a place in the curriculum of Junior Basic schools it has now left the option, as far as Senior Basic schools are concerned, in the hands of the Provincial Governments.

So in future education will be compulsory for all children (both boys and girls) from 6 to 14 and the content of this education will be more or less along the lines of Basic education with a good deal of emphasis on the activity principle. And when the system is universally introduced we shall, in our primary schools only, that is, in the Junior and Senior Basic schools only, have nearly 6 crores 59 lakhs of pupils*. For this vast school population in our ele-

* These figures are for the whole of India.

mentary schools we shall require an army of more than twenty-three lakhs of teachers. There will thus be an enormous increase in the number of both pupils and teachers.

The central point of the Central Advisory Board's scheme is the teacher. The Board has rightly held that there cannot be any improvement of education without an improvement in the status and conditions of service of teachers. For that the first thing necessary is the provision of a better scale of salaries for them. The Board has therefore laid down a basic minimum national scale of pay for teachers of all grades and types. For primary school teachers other than heads the grade is Rs. 30—50. For teachers in the Senior Basic schools the minimum scale recommended is Rs. 40—80. For head teachers higher salaries are provided. No one will contend that this scale is either exorbitant or even adequate ; but this seems to be the best that could be done under the present circumstances. In the Junior Basic stage the number of teachers required is calculated on the basis of 1 teacher to every 30 pupils and in the Senior Basic stage the calculation is on the basis of 1 teacher to every 25 pupils. In high schools it is assumed that there will be 1 teacher for every 20 pupils. On this basis the total number of teachers required when the scheme will be in full swing will be about 28 lakhs (including high schools).

In a normally functioning school unit the remuneration of teachers generally covers about 70% of the total expenditure. If then we know the number of

teachers we require and their scale of pay, it is not difficult to calculate the total cost of establishing a national system. It will come to about Rs. 200 crores, Rs. 114 crores being required for Junior Basic schools and Rs. 86 crores for Senior Basic schools. The Board has worked out the details of the training and supply of teachers for the national system, spread over a period of 40 years, divided into several five-year stages.

Such is in outline the Central Advisory Board's scheme for reconstructing primary education in India. There have been many criticisms of the scheme, some of them being of a curious nature. Some people have criticised it because they see in it an attempt to foist the framework of the English system on this country. Today the frameworks of the educational systems in different countries are bound to resemble each other to a large extent. For there are certain characteristics common to all national systems of education. The important thing therefore is not the framework but the content.

Others have objected to it because by implying centralisation it is supposed to militate against the principles of provincial autonomy ! Such arguments can weigh with politicians but not with educationists. Is it more important to educate the people of the country even if in the process of doing so the autonomy of the provinces in the matter of educational administration is circumscribed temporarily and to some extent, or to continue to indirectly support inaction and inefficiency on the plea

of the sacredness of the so-called autonomy ? The answer to the above would, I believe, be clear to all.

Of all these criticisms of the scheme there are two which need detain us. They are about the time and the amount of money that will be required to implement the scheme. It is being said that the scheme will cost us too much and that it will take too long to be put into full operation. The Board anticipated these two objections and have answered them in their report. They have justly pointed out that the determining factor in both the cases is the teacher. "Any scheme of educational reconstruction specially of the nature suggested here would fail unless the right type of teachers with proper educational qualifications and necessary professional training is recruited and they are paid a decent scale of pay." An impartial examination of the standards adopted by the Board regarding the recruitment, training and remuneration of teachers would reveal that they are just what we want, neither too high nor too low. Twenty-three lakhs of teachers (for, as we have already seen that will be the number we shall require if we are to introduce compulsion all over the country for all children between six and fourteen) cannot be recruited, not to speak of being trained overnight or even in a few years. No one would think that the basic minimum national scale proposed by the Board is ambitious. Nor is the initial qualification, (a matriculation certificate) demanded from those who are going to take up teaching, set very high. If we were ready only

to multiply the number of existing primary schools to provide accommodation for all the six crores of children and bring them to school somehow or other without bothering about the quality of education, then perhaps teachers with lower qualifications and no special training for their work might be taken in. We could then cut down both the cost and the time. We have already seen how in some parts of the country in order to accelerate the rate of progress or for some such temptation under-qualified men were appointed and with what disastrous results. We do not want to repeat the mistake. So we shall have to proceed with great caution and circumspection. We must therefore warn ourselves against undue haste which may impair efficiency and ultimately lead to wastage of effort. We too do not want to delay longer than is absolutely necessary nor do we want to spend more than what we must, commensurate with the requirements of a sound and efficient system.

With regard to the cost two facts will have to be clearly borne in mind. Firstly, India has not yet got a national system of education, and until and unless she builds up such a system she will have to be content to occupy an inferior position in the society of nations. This is a position no self-respecting Indian would accept. Secondly, in the matter of building a national system no compromise and halfway houses are possible. This is a truth which should be hammered into the minds of those who have always pleaded the paucity of funds and who, by way of compromise, have given us a system

which does not provide the foundation for a sound and effective national system. Such is the opinion about the present system held by the Board, an opinion supported by those who are in a position to judge and who are competent to express it. The Board also rightly observes : "In fact much of the present rambling edifice will have to be scraped in order that something better may be substituted." This means that the money that has already been spent has been more or less wasted. Economy at times may be dangerous ; it may defeat its own purpose. Education is a field where economy does not pay in the long run as we know by bitter experience of the past. We may no doubt modify the seemingly ambitious Sargent plan here and there and economise under this or that head, we may try to cut down the expenditure on this or that account, there may be adjustments which will bring down the costs to some extent ; but on the whole the general plan will remain much the same and this would mean an expenditure many times more than what we are at present incurring. The crux of the whole problem is, as the Board has justly observed, the teacher. Their salary bill will cover the major portion of the increased expenditure. In order to cut down the expenses are we then to continue to underpay the teachers and encourage all the evils of the present system, or shall we boldly face the facts and decide to have an efficient and truly national system whatever may be the cost ?

A demand for three hundred crores of rupees annually, however impossible it may appear at first

sight, can, really speaking, be hardly called exorbitant. Three hundred crores of rupees for forty crores of the people of this vast sub-continent work out at less than ten rupees *per capita* and this is for all types of education. In England today they spend nearly thirty-five rupees per head of the population and after forty long years from now we shall be spending, if the present scheme is adopted, only rupees eight per head.

But the question of our poverty is a stern reality. If we are to spend Rs. 200 crores where is that money to come from ? In this connection it is necessary to point out that, as the Board has shown, we shall not require all the two hundred crores at a time or here and now, and that the cost will increase only gradually. The incidence of the approximate additional expenditure in eight successive five-year stages has been worked out and for the next five years we shall not require anything more than Rs. 10 crores per annum for all types of education dealt with in the Central Advisory Board's Report. (At present we spend in all about rupees thirty crores on different types of education.) During the next five-year period the additional expenditure will gradually rise and come to about twenty four crores in the tenth year. Naturally the share of primary education in this expenditure will be the largest. But even then it would appear that the demand is by no means exorbitant. Rupees twenty crores per annum for the next ten years to improve the quality of primary education is certainly not an unjust demand.

But the question still remains, where is the money

to come from ? .The scheme of Basic education, if accepted will give us some return thereby cutting down the running cost to some extent. Adoption of a plan like the C. P. Vidyamandir Plan may also ease the situation partly by the decentralisation of financial responsibility to a further extent.* But even then expenses will be so heavy that the Provincial Governments situated as they at present are, will not be in a position to implement the programme. Therefore, as I have already suggested, the Central Government must make themselves responsible for primary education and for financing it. There is no other way out of the difficulty. How they will do so is their business. In this connection the Board observes : "The expenditure involved is admittedly heavy but the experience of the war suggests that when paramount necessity can be established, the money required to meet it can and will be found." We only hope that it will be so.

Moreover, we are hoping that under more favourable conditions which we expect in future, many other means will be available for raising the national income. Educational planning is only a part of national planning. With effective national planning

*The Vidyamandir scheme was sponsored in C. P. during the regime of the Congress ministers. The importance of the scheme lay in the suggestion it made for the organisation and maintenance of the primary school system. While accepting the Basic syllabus for the content of education the Vidyamandir scheme suggested that in every village sufficient land would be set apart for the maintenance of the village primary school. The income from that land would cover the salary of the teacher and other incidental expenses. Thus the school instead of depending on grants from the provincial exchequer would become a part of the village economy and be maintained as such. The scheme in fact revived an idea which had been put forward a century ago by William Adam in connection with the spread of popular education in Bengal. (See *Reports of William Adam* edited by A. N. Basu and published by the University of Calcutta).

of the economic, industrial and commercial life, with the proper exploitation of our national resources of men and materials, the national income shall, we are hoping, be high enough so that it will be possible to raise the amount necessary for financing educational reforms by taxation or otherwise.

There is no doubt that ultimately we shall have to take recourse to further taxation. The proceeds of the cess will never cover the proposed additional expenditure. Along what lines further taxation may be introduced cannot be anticipated here and now ; that will be for the economists to decide ; but it may be suggested that as the burden on the agricultural classes is already admittedly heavy the proposed additional burden should be placed not on their shoulders but on those of the wealthier classes whose wealth ultimately comes mostly from the farmers and tillers of the soil.

Next to finance is the question of the length of the period of compulsory education. In the Basic scheme, we may remember, the age-range recommended is 7 to 14 and in the Board scheme it is 6 to 14. We may here note that increasing the age-range by a year involves an additional expenditure of about Rs. 20 crores. There is no doubt that the earlier we can bring in children to school the easier it becomes to educate them and the longer the period of their education the better our chances of securing the fundamental objectives. But in our position it is obvious that we must decide upon a feasible and practicable age-range. What is that range to be ?

Here the Board justly advises us against applying compulsion only up to the end of the Junior Basic stage in the first instance and then extending it gradually upwards as circumstances would suggest and finances would permit. The experience of other countries, it has pointed out, has shown conclusively how inefficient and wasteful such a procedure may ultimately be. Moreover, as the Board also pointedly mentions, an education which lasts only for five years and ends about the age of eleven cannot be regarded as an adequate preparation either for life or livelihood. In the opinion of the Board therefore, if compulsion is to be introduced by stages, the progression should clearly be from area to area and not from age to age. This is an eminently sound piece of advice which can only be disregarded at the risk of making the system ineffective. On no account then we should start with a five-year range beginning at 6 and ending at 11, an age just when it is highly desirable to keep the young people in an educational environment.

We have already given our reasons why we must keep the upper limit at 14 or thereabout. So the only course that appears to be open to us is to progress by areas. Here however, we may consider another alternative. Instead of the eight-year age-range from 6 to 14 will it be possible, at the first instance, to have a shorter age-range calculating from 14 downwards? For example, we may start with the age-range of 8 to 14 or 9 to 14 and then gradually extend the period downwards. We may even as a compromise begin with an age-range of five years from 8 to 13. There

are several points in favour of this suggestion of beginning with older children in the place of children of five or six. Firstly, older children may be better and more easily motivated than younger children and because of that in spite of the disadvantages due to age they may take less time than younger children to cover the desired course of studies prescribed for this stage. It is quite conceivable that the present seven-year Basic course or eight-year Board course will be covered in six or even five years if we have an older group of children to deal with. Eight-year old children without losing the mental pliability of younger children will have greater capacity to work and learn. Their capacity for sustained work is greater and an activity-centred curriculum (as the future curriculum is going to be) of the type proposed is, in some respects, more suitable for them than for younger children. With older children it is also possible to build bigger school units. So the number of schools to start with may be much less than it would be if we were to begin with children of five or six. With young children it becomes necessary to provide almost each and every village with a school. That is not always an economic proposition. This difficulty will be obviated if we start with older children. This would also mean less expenditure on overhead charges, on building, equipment etc. There are certain other advantages of fixing the age-range for compulsion like this. One is that under such arrangements, the possibilities of wastage will be reduced to the minimum. Children who would be in

school from eight to thirteen would be less likely to forget and relapse into illiteracy than those who would finish at eleven. Then again the cost will be much less than what a full-bodied scheme would require. The expenses will, in fact, be reduced almost by half. This is no mean advantage, specially to us situated as we are. So we suggest that to start with we have compulsory primary education for children of eight to thirteen only and then as the situation improves and as more funds are available we extend the range of compulsion both ways, downwards and upwards.

We may mention here another advantage of the above proposal. It will also obviate the cut at eleven plus and the consequent indirect interposition of an intermediate stage either in the shape of a Senior school or junior department of a high school. The psychological reasons offered in support of the cut at eleven plus have never been very convincing. The changes which are supposed to begin at eleven on the basis of which selection can be made, really speaking, come a year or two later, between twelve and fourteen, with allowances for individual differences. This is now being more or less recognised and educated opinion is gradually coming to question the advisability of the cut at eleven plus. It is now held that it is not possible at this early stage to decide finally whether a child is suitable for high school education or not. That those who advocate such a cut are conscious of this fact is obvious from the provision they always recommend for another transfer at thirteen.

The time-element is dependent largely on the number of teachers and how soon they can be recruited. To expedite the supply of teachers it has, therefore, been suggested that we take recourse to conscription. For example, we may make it compulsory for all those who pass the matriculation examination in any particular year to give voluntary service for at least one year before going to college or taking up any other profession, and to serve as teachers in primary schools. They may be given short and intensive courses of training and then those who will prefer to stick to teaching after the year's service may be given further training to complete their course. Such matriculates will surely be good enough to start and work in the first grade of primary schools which would not, in the beginning, require much theoretical knowledge or a long course of practical training on the part of the teachers. What will be necessary is a spirit of service, a belief in the nobility of the work itself, and one may expect these from youngmen and women who will take up the work as a form of obligatory national service. The idea of compulsory national service is nothing new, though its application to this kind of work may partly be. In this connection we may notice how in England too they are thinking of interposing a year of compulsory national service between the matriculation and entrance into the universities. It is being pointed out that psychologically and sociologically such service would be a great value to our young men and women who are coming out of school and are just about to enter the

threshold of life. Contact with the world at this stage will give them a clearer understanding of national problems and thus help them in attaining mental maturity, and at the same time develop in them the idea of national solidarity. For all these reasons it has been suggested that we enlist the services of matriculates fresh from their schools for spreading elementary education. This suggestion should be seriously considered specially in view of our difficulties and the urgency of the problem which demands that we achieve maximum progress in minimum time. Obviously, the method has its limitations. It can at best be a partial solution. For we shall not get all the teachers we require even in this manner. All the same, we may apply this method and see how it works. If it does, then there is no doubt that the time-element can be cut down at least to some extent.

In the measure proposed by us there is no room for a cut at eleven plus or for a parallel system of schools for children of the same age-group. As a result we have only one type of schools for all children between the ages of 8 to 14. Sociologically this is extremely desirable. It strikes at the root of the class conception of education. It will foster greater unity at the common school level. For a nation divided like ours that will certainly be a great boon.

It should be clearly understood that the proposal made here is suggested only as a matter of expediency. It should not be construed to mean

that we do not attach any importance to the education of very young children before the age of eight. Far from that, it is only because we have not just now funds enough that we are not including them within the purview of the proposed compulsory system with a restricted age-range. What we have in effect suggested is that for the present pre-school education will be left to private enterprise as primary school education has hitherto been. And there is no reason to doubt that private enterprise will be as readily forthcoming as it did in the past in the case of primary education, to supplement the public, i.e. state effort in education. We may remember that in the field of primary education the contribution of private effort in the past has been to no mean extent. There is therefore no justification to belittle the future possibilities of private enterprise and initiative in the field of pre-school education either. Then again pre-school education will not be left to private efforts for all times. We have already stated that as soon as funds would permit we shall extend the range of compulsion downwards i.e. we shall lower and extend the age for compulsion.

It may be asked what will happen to children below eight in the meantime ; will they go without any education ? If the worst comes to the worst then perhaps it will be so, that is, such children will have no regular and organised schooling. But would that be worse than what would happen if they were to receive the kind of bad education that is being imparted to them at present ? For after all,

it yet remains to be proved that bad education is better than no education. Moreover we must realise that even as things are or things are going to be under the reconstructed system, we cannot bring in the children early enough to begin their education. For if we are to believe in the testimony of the psychologists their education begins much earlier and the general outline of their character is formed by the time children are about two years old. Even under the ideal circumstances we shall not be able to begin their education as early as that. So whether we shall begin at five or six or eight is, after all, to be decided mainly on other grounds. Really speaking it matters little whether we begin a year or two earlier or later.

Furthermore, by deferring the introduction of compulsion by two years we shall give the children more opportunities for enriching their perceptual experiences from direct contact with life and for sharing the educative influences of their family and social life than they at present have. Today there is a tendency for the school to encroach too much upon the homes thereby denying the latter the opportunities to exercise the extremely valuable influences which can come from no other quarter and which can be compensated in no other manner. We must realise that the education of children is a co-operative venture between the home and the school, and even in the meanest and most uneducated homes there are certain opportunities for work and companionship which have undoubted

educational values and which cannot be provided in the primary schools as they are at present constituted. It is a pity that sometimes parents would like to send their children away to school just to avoid their share of responsibility for the education of their children who are often looked upon as being a source of nuisance. It is also a pity that by thus shirking their responsibility they thrust upon the schools responsibilities which very few schools are in a position to discharge. To conclude then, our proposal for beginning compulsion with eight-year old children should be judged on its own merits and it should not be construed as a disparagement of the values and importance of early education or of the work done in schools for younger children including the Montessori and nursery schools.

It should be added that our proposal is not so novel as it may appear at first sight. We may remember that in Russia compulsory education begins at eight and there nursery school education is neither compulsory nor is it a part of the national system of education in the sense that all children get the advantages of a nursery school education.

Having thus defined the age-range for compulsion, our next task will be to set up an adequate administrative machinery at the centre and in the provinces. We have already shown how the provision of a national system of compulsory primary education should be primarily the duty of the Central Government and how without adequate help and

effective control from the centre any system is likely to be ineffectual and inoperative as it has been in the past. We have in this connection pointed out the financial difficulties of the provinces. In view of these difficulties there should be an equitable distribution between the centre and the provinces in the share of the cost of maintaining the system. It is difficult to apportion their respective shares in a general manner and in the absence of more adequate provincial data, but we may, generally speaking, suggest that the centre should make itself responsible for the major item in the expenditure. This, as we know, relates to teachers' salaries which we suggest should come from the Central exchequer. This will be the most effective form of assurance not only to the provincial governments but also to the people about the soundness of the system. The provinces should meet the cost of training the teachers and maintaining the organisation and that of inspection and administration. This will include the charges for free supply of books and equipments, free tiffin to needy children, maintenance grants to indigent parents, and the like.

An effective control from the centre will also assure us of a uniformity which is not only desirable but essential. Too much has been made in the past of the so-called provincial peculiarities and their special problems, so such so that there is today no uniform nomenclature and no uniform system of gradation of schools throughout India. In some provinces we have four classes in the primary stage,

in others, five grades. Such differences can only create confusion. In the interests of national life it is therefore incumbent that there should be a more or less uniform system all over the country. Effective control from the centre can alone guarantee that. From what we have said it should not be understood that we support absolute uniformity of educational practice throughout the country. Far from that, we should be prepared to encourage not only provincial but also local variations and adaptations which a living system always permits. In our Indian educational system too there will be provision for experiments and for changes, but within certain wide limits. The sole purpose of such limits will be to preserve the essential unity underlying the Indian system of education.

Coming now to the provinces we have seen the ineffectiveness of the so-called local education authorities in the past. These should henceforth become merely advisory bodies without any executive responsibilities. Such responsibilities should entirely rest with the provincial governments. The powers of initiation and administration should be theirs. The views expressed by the Central Advisory Board on this subject should be fully endorsed and supported.

One word may be said about the reorganisation of the supervisory staff. The present system of horizontal division of the inspectorate is irrational. It should be vertically divided. A man who has been supervising the work in primary schools, under the present arrangements, in some provinces at least, is

on promotion called upon to supervise a new type of schools with the working of which he is not at all familiar. This is not a rational procedure and so it is necessary to alter the system. For primary education we should have the entire hierarchy of inspectors from circle inspectors to a chief inspector for a province. In some provinces the number of sub-inspectors is so inadequate that each of them has to inspect about 150 schools in the year. This is neither desirable nor feasible. Better supervision always pays in the long run. So we suggest an entire reorganisation of the inspectorate, and a new orientation of the duties and functions of inspectors. In the matter of inspection the services of the heads of training institutions should also be utilised. Further, there should be some subject-inspectors, such as inspectors for art and handwork and for physical education. With the inspectorate thus re-organised, we can be assured of greater efficiency and better work.

Our next task will be to plan the stages of progress. In this matter too the views of the Central Advisory Board should be fully endorsed. We shall have several five-year plans, all clear-cut and complete. Each five-year plan should lay down its objectives in unmistakable terms so that the goals are clearly visualised from the very beginning. Then again, as we shall have to proceed by stages from area to area, in the preparatory years careful surveys will have to be made, priorities are to be decided and the areas selected. The first start should be made in compact areas. Each district will have

its own compact area where experiments with the new curriculum will be carried on. Having selected a compact area our task will be to provide the necessary school accommodation for that area and then to recruit teachers and give them the preliminary training. With regard to school accommodation our present-day ideas will have to be entirely revised. The school is a miniature society, a complete social unit. Viewed thus it is not enough to hire or build a school house with a number of classrooms furnished with benches and desks where children can sit and read and write. In future a school will invariably include, besides the classrooms (and we need not always have classrooms of the four-walled type), workshops, gardens and playing fields. None of the above can be left out without detriment to the real interests of education. When we speak of buildings and equipments we do not advocate costly and imposing brick-buildings, chairs, high benches, desks and such like things. What we want are decent houses in keeping with the village environment but with plenty of space for activities of various kinds. In a tropical country like ours classes may be easily held under shady trees for a major portion of the year; but we need special accommodation (which may well and easily be of a very simple type) for craftwork and for certain subjects.

It has been suggested that in order to meet the capital charges on account of school buildings, Provincial Governments may float loans. This suggestion merits careful consideration. For land it

should be possible for us to get it from the villagers. In fact gift of land may be made the basis of a claim for priority in the matter of school provision.

About equipments it shall be the duty of the Provincial government to provide them and provide them in a generous manner. Schools must have necessary tools for craftwork and such activities, and physical education. They should also be supplied with those material aids to teaching in the absence of which teaching is apt to be confined to talk and chalk. Talking of chalk reminds us that very few of our primary schools have scope even for its free use. Black-boards are not available in most schools, and where they do exist, they are either so small or so bad as to be of no practical use. While on this topic we may mention that we consider benches and high desks absolutely unnecessary for our schools ; simple mats and simple desks which older children can make and repair should be considered sufficient.

Recruitment and training of teachers will proceed side by side with the provision of school accommodation. About training we recommend short and intensive courses of preliminary training and frequent refresher courses. We are not in a position to follow the ideal method of providing a prolonged course to start with. One may even question whether that would be the best system and whether a short course followed by refresher courses would not be better. Whatever it may be, our suggestion provides a more practical alternative in the initial stage. The important thing however is the attitude of the teacher. If we can inspire

him with the spirit of service, if he can be made to regard his work as his contribution to national service, half our battle will be won. No pay or training by itself can inspire that spirit, and yet when all is said it is the most essential condition of success.

Our next task will be to lay down the primary curriculum in clear terms. We have already defined the objectives of primary education. The curriculum is to be framed in keeping with these objectives and the factors involved in the development of children. Granted these premises, it is obvious that we shall have to replace the present bookish curriculum by an activity curriculum of an integrated nature which will make ample provision for adequate physical, emotional and social education besides intellectual training, which will, in fact, be a curriculum for the education of the whole man. In this connection we shall have to decide whether we can adopt the Basic education curriculum which certainly fulfils many of our requirements. We may either accept it in toto or we may adapt it as the Central Advisory Board has recommended. There is no doubt that our future curriculum will be very much influenced by the Basic curriculum.

Apropos the curriculum it is necessary to remember that under ideal circumstances it is always being modified and reshuffled. That is as it should be. A rigid curriculum is undesirable, for it goes against the fundamental principles of individual differences and constant social changes. There should therefore be constant experimentation on curriculum construc-

tion to be undertaken by the training colleges which should also be entrusted with the experiments on the preparation of text books. Our present system of selection of books is utterly defective ; the interests of the children are practically being sacrificed for the gain of the publishers. Text-books to be prepared only on the basis of scientifically planned and carefully conducted experiments should be published by the Government and supplied at a nominal cost or even free. We are looking forward to the condition of things when books and other materials will be supplied to school children free of cost. This is the practice in progressive countries to the great relief of the people. We seldom take into account how much a parent pays through fees books etc. even now to maintain the present system of primary education.

A curriculum is helpful no doubt but its success will depend on the method of teaching and on the teachers who will use the curriculum. With a new curriculum we must have new methods of teaching. In this connection we should consider and experiment with the Basic method of integrated teaching as also with the Project method, the Winnetka plan and the Dalton plan of individualised instruction. Experiments alone can show which would be the best method for us.

But even the best of methods would not mean anything apart from the teacher who will handle it. Unless he is of the right sort, no method or curriculum can improve the state of things. He himself

must be educated enough in order that he may educate the children properly. He must have the proper mental background for his work, and the necessary professional training. And then he must be provided with at least living wages. Above all he must be inspired with a spirit of service. For the time will never come when we shall pay our primary school teachers as liberally as we shall pay other skilled workers such as lawyers, doctors or engineers or even high school teachers. So ultimately we shall have to depend upon their spirit of sacrifice. At best we can compensate for the inadequacy of pay by giving them the social status which is rightfully theirs and which teachers in this country had enjoyed from time immemorial till about a century ago when a new set of values based on economic standards replaced the old ones. The future of our primary education will depend much upon how we solve this problem of giving a new social status and prestige to those who will voluntarily embrace a life of poverty in the service of the coming generation. Only the concerted will and effort of the entire nation can solve this problem and thus assure the future generations of a better type of education.



